

Ms. Laura Bunker, United Families, testimony

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Alcohol regulation is not about religion, hospitality, or business. It is about regulating a mind-altering drug, to protect society. Alcohol impacts families in many ways, but today we specifically address underage drinking.

Underage drinking brings heavy consequences to teens, families, and the nation as a whole.ⁱ The good news is that Utah has the lowest number of underage drinkers in the country.ⁱⁱ The bad news is alcohol is still the #1 abused substance in Utah,ⁱⁱⁱ and is the #1 drug of choice for teens.^{iv}

Underage drinking is a special concern because teens *think* differently and *drink* differently than adults. Young people are more likely than adults to drink heavily, often drinking five or more drinks at a sitting.^v The Utah Department of Public Safety reports that “In Utah. . . binge drinking is a common activity by the 10th grade,” increasing the risks of brain damage and addiction to teens, and harm to society.^{vi}

Research suggests that there are two key factors linked to underage drinking:

Youth are strongly influenced by Social Norms.^{vii viii}

Social Norms are how people view alcohol, and what our cultural expectations are. They are so powerful that high schools, universities, and communities across America are using “Social Norms Marketing” to *reduce* drinking problems.^{ix x xi} These programs publicize the message that “alcohol is not as important here as you thought.” Social Norms Marketing is working, and was listed by New York Times Magazine as one of the most significant ideas of 2001.^{xii}

In Utah, our version of “Social Norms Marketing” includes preparing alcoholic beverages in a separated area of a restaurant. This intentional separation sends a message to minors that alcohol is different than soft drinks or juice--it is a potentially dangerous substance. We are opposed to any legislation that would remove these separations, because it would send the message that “alcohol is normal part of dining, and *more* important here than you thought.” According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse, positive messages such as these do contribute to an *increase* in underage drinking.^{xiii xiv}

2) When alcohol becomes more available, underage drinking increases.^{xv}
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“Availability is the *degree of effort* required to obtain alcohol”^{xvii} Fewer barriers to obtaining alcohol, and more alcohol outlets, increase availability and increase underage drinking.^{xviii} Because of this, the Surgeon General has called for “measures that directly reduce alcohol availability.”^{xix}

We are concerned that increasing the quota of licenses for clubs *increases* alcohol availability. And because minors are allowed in dining clubs, more dining clubs means more exposure to alcohol for minors. Anytime we make it easier for adults to obtain alcohol, both adult consumption *and* underage consumption increases.

We are also concerned that allowing heavy beer to be distributed by beer wholesalers directly to licensees, rather than distribution through the state warehouse system, will weaken the state alcohol control system that has served the state well.

Utah State Code 32B mandates that while we “reasonably satisfy the public demand” we also *promote the reduction* of the harmful effects of . . . the consumption of alcoholic products by minors.” It is our legal duty to “promote the reduction” of underage drinking. None of these proposals do that, in fact, they take us in the opposite direction.

Underage drinking (unlike underage dining) doesn’t just affect the person doing the drinking, it affects all of us. The Surgeon General stated it is “everyone’s problem—and its solutions are everyone’s responsibility.”^{xx} So when legislation comes before you that would change the way our culture views alcohol, or make it easier to get in any way, please do what we tell our young people:

“Just Say No.”

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- Parents *are* the #1 influence on youth, but in addition the Law is a Teacher. Law shapes the way we think as a culture, and creates a climate that supports parents.
 - State Alcohol Control system controls heavy beer, wine, distilled spirits. If we make an exception for heavy beer, we will soon be discussing exceptions for wine and distilled spirits.

In Wyoming, alcohol is prepared in an entirely separate room.^{xxi}

• 218 Froerer club quotas, 350 Oda heavy beer, 228 Wilcox partition

References:

i National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Nov 20, 2012, *Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)*, <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k12/NSDUH111/SR111StateEstUnderageAlc2012.pdf>

ii Ibid.

iii Leonard, Wendy, 2012, *Latest study: Alcohol use lowest among Utah teens*, Deseret News Nov. 26, 2013. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865567555/Latest-study-Alcohol-use-lowest-among-Utah-teens.html?pg=all>

iv Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fact Sheets - Underage Drinking <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>

v U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Drinking in America: Myths, Realities, and Prevention Policy*, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 2002. http://www.udetc.org/documents/Drinking_in_America.pdf

vi Utah Department of Public Safety, *Highway Safety - Youth Alcohol*. <http://publicsafety.utah.gov/highwaysafety/youthalcohol.html>

vii **“Social norms and expectations play a powerful role in shaping the alcohol environment at both the community and societal level.”**
US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *“Drinking in America: Myths, Realities, and Prevention Policy,”* 2002. www.udetc.org/documents/Drinking_in_America.pdf

viii **“Students’ perception of their campus drinking norm was the strongest predictor of personal consumption”** U.S. Department of Education *Recognizes Four Colleges For Their Effective Social Norms Approaches To Curb High-Risk Drinking Among College Students*, 2006. <http://www.socialnorms.org/PressRoom/USDOEgrants2006.php>

ix Ibid.

x David J. Hanson, Ph.D., Alcohol Problems and Solutions, *Social Norms Marketing Reduces High School Drinking*, State University of New York <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/YouthIssues/1093545307.html>

xi Prevention First, Leadership for drug-free communities, Professional Development Resource Guide #2, Social Norms Marketing <http://www.prevention.org/ProfDev/documents/SocialNormsMarketing.pdf>

xii Mark Frauenfelder, *The Year in Ideas: A to Z Social-Norms Marketing*, New York Times Magazine, Dec 9, 2001 <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B04E4DD143CF93AA35751C1A9679C8B63>

xiii **“Positive beliefs about alcohol’s effects and the social acceptability of drinking encourage the adolescent to begin and continue drinking.”**
Underage Drinking: A Major Public Health Challenge, *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institutes of Health*, Alcohol Alert no. 59 <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa59.htm>

xiv **“How people view alcohol and its effects . . . influences their drinking behavior, including whether they begin to drink and how much.”** Why Do Adolescents Drink, What are the Risks, and How Can Underage Drinking be Prevented? *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institute of Health*, Alcohol Alert no. 67 <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA67/AA67.htm>

xv **“Within a given population, public health problems will increase as availability increases, and will decrease as availability decreases. Youth are particularly sensitive to these alcohol availability variables.”** The Role of Alcohol Beverage Control Agencies in the Enforcement and Adjudication of Alcohol Law, *US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*, July 2005 <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/enforce/ABCRoleWeb/pages/Introduction.htm>

xvi **“Reducing access to alcohol is a critical element in the prevention of underage alcohol consumption.”** *The National Survey on Drug Use and Health Report*, Nov 20, 2012 <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k12/NSDUH111/SR111StateEstUnderageAlc2012.pdf>

xvii Underage Drinking: A Growing Health Care Concern, *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health*, <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/PSA/underagepg2.htm>

xviii **“A “wetter” environment may provide adolescents with more social occasions to drink, more positive attitudes about drinking, more advertising and outlets, and more lenient regulations concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol. In short, such environments have an enabling effect on underage drinking.”** Richard J. Bonnie, Mary Ellen O’Connell, Editors, 2004, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press

xix **Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,**

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/calltoaction.pdf>

xx U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Communities. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General*, 2007. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/underagedrinking/communityguide.pdf>

